

Russian Army Loses 500,000 In NATO Guess

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The Russian Army "lost" a half-million men over the last two years, according to NATO estimates.

Russia may not actually have reduced its army, but the estimates shrank greatly over the last two years, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara pointed out during the NATO defense ministers conference in Paris this week.

The agreed-on NATO estimate now says that the Russian Army totals 1,750,000 men. Two years ago the estimate was about 2,250,000.

The new estimates are now close in line with what McNamara and his analysts believe the figure should have been all along.

The significance of the change is that the allies have come closer to the McNamara position that NATO today is strong enough to fight the Soviet Union in a non-nuclear land war in Europe and, if not win, at least tie.

McNamara concludes from this analysis that NATO need not rely almost solely on nuclear deterrents and a nuclear defense, but should reasonably hope to field forces that could win either kind of war.

The alliance forces available in Europe total 3 million men. The Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact satellites have 2.7 million.

Comparing tactical aircraft, the Warsaw Pact countries have 6,000, including Russian aircraft east of the Urals, while NATO countries have 8,000, including planes all over the world.

The American estimates say that NATO is ahead on quality in both armies and air forces. They are vastly ahead in navies.

McNamara believes that with modest and inexpensive improvements to NATO communications, supply structures, reserves and tactics, the Western allies probably will be able to handle any future non-nuclear threat without resorting to nuclear weapons.